A PITHIE AND SHORT TREATISE BY VVAY of Dialogue, whereby a godly Christian is directed how to make his last Will and testament, to dispose well and wisely of his temporall goods; and how to prepare himselfe to the Lord, to depart this world peaceably and comfortably, committing himselfe in soule and body, into the hands of God, his faithfull Creatour.

ESAY 38.

Put thine house in order, for thou must die.

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To the Reader.

THE holy Patriarch Iacob being demanded by Pharaoh how old he was, answered, his daies were few and euill; and yet the time of his pilgrimage had bene an hundred and thirty yeares, which is double man's ordinary race in this latter age. Holy Iob also out of his owne sense & experience witnesseth in these words, Man that is borne of a woman is of short continuance, and full of trouble. Our daies are few and euill, and full of trouble; to weane vs from setting our affection and loue vpon this life which is subiect to so much vanity and molestation; and to teach vs to employ, and vse well and wisely the short and vncertaine time that is lent vs, being so deare and pre-

Gen. 47.

Iob. 14.1.

ous, as being once past cannot at any rate be recouered and got againe; and therefore while we haue time so to bestow it, as not onely our selues may be benefited, our soules comforted, our calling and election assured; but also God himselfe glorified, and our brethren and neighbours by our good example prouoked, and by our good instruction allured to religious and holy duties. And this duty of drawing others to God and godlinesse, as it concerneth the Ministers and teachers of Gods word publickly, so parents and maisters of families priuately. The father, saith the Prophet Esay, shall declare thy truth to his children: and so likewise the maister, who is the father of the family, is to performe the like dutie to his seruants. Oh that all whom it concerneth would be carefull in this case, and shake off that carelesnesse, security and forgetfulnesse of this duty, which too too much preuaileth in these daies! Then would they bestow more time than they do in instru-

Esay 38.18. 19.

cting

cting, gouerning and bettering themselues, their charges and their families, in the knowledge, seruice and obedience of God; and so should they rightly answer their name of Paterfamilias, & be true fathers of their families. Great wil be the anguish, sorrow, griefe, perplexitie and distresse, that the neglect and omission of this duty may hereafter procure vs vpon our death-beds, by a gnawing and griping of conscience for our failing herein; & on the other side great is the comfort, ioy, peace, solace, quiet of conscience and tranquility of mind, that the godly and conscionable performance hereof will bring vs in that day when we shall lie vpon our bed of sorow, as Dauid calleth it Psal. 41.3. in the greatest extremities, paines and pangs of death. As it comforted Iob in his most grieuous calamity, that he had not cõcealed or denied the words of the Holy one. A full & certaine assurance hereof to the conscience, at that day will be more worth then all treasures Iob 6.10.

of gold and siluer. This might be confirmed by many places of Scripture, and illustrated by many examples, but we are in a preface, and not in a treatise, and therefore vnfit to be long and tedious, and the rather because the treatise it selfe is so short and cõpendious. Yet as short as it is, you shall finde therein the performance of this duety laid forth in very excellent manner, which may serue both for prouocation to moue vs vnto it, and for direction to enforme vs in it. It is quickly read being so short, & not hard to be practised if God giue grace. The God of grace from whom cometh euery good and perfect gift, enlighten our vnderstandings that we may know; quicken and stir vp our affections, that we may desire; & direct our actions, that we may do those things that are pleasing in his sight; that after his short and miserable life is ended, we may liue in heauen, where in his presence is all fulnes of ioy, and pleasures for euermore. Amen.

Psal. 16. 11.

Christian Instructions giuen by a faithfull Pastor to one of his flocke, concerning making his Will.

Minister.

I Am come to see how you do, good neighbour, hearing of your extreme sickenesse: that if it please God, to take you out of this life, I may set you right in the way to heauen, as I haue endeuored to do hitherto, since I came to be your Pastor. How do you man? how feele you your selfe?

Christian.

I thanke you good Sir for this your great loue and kindenes, and also for all the cõforts I haue had by you since your first

coming hither. I thanke God, I am wel in soule through the washing and purging by the bloud of my saviour Iesus Christ, which through Gods superabundant mercie, cleanseth me from all my sinne: but sicke in body, I am so sicke as that I suppose my death & dissolution is neere, to the finishing of this life, of misery, and the entring and establishing of me in the blessed life of glory: which Lord I beseech thee to hasten for thy Christs sake, Amen. And now I am most glad that you are come now to helpe me, and direct me to the right end of my iourney, desiring your assistance by Gods word in euery duty yet to be performed by me, both to God and man: And then with ioy I will bid the world farewell, for I feele death aproach. I beseech you therefore to be as briefe as you may, and by Gods word direct me first for the disposing of my worldly goods, lands, and other things: for that it is vndone.

Minister.

Minister.

I am glad to see you so strong in the Lord, deare brother, and most willingly I will do that you request; but I must tell you by the way, that you haue done full euill, in not making your will in the time of your health, seeing your old age so to approach, that by the course of nature your daies could not be long: and if God should haue taken you away sodainely, as he doth in mercy some of his deare seruants, then should you thereby haue bene perhaps the Author of bitter strife and contention amongst your children; which is one of the things so abhominable & hateful in Gods sight, namely to raise contentions among brethren. And how you can auoide that yet, though God in mercy do giue you time in this your sickneſſe to make your will, I know not, except your children be Prou. 6. 19.

the better disposed, and louing one to another, and you distribute so equally vnto them, that none of them haue cause to finde fault. But if in the time of your health you had disposed of your goods and lands, then should you haue seene perchance, whether any would haue bene discontent with your equall distribution; and they that had without iust cause, bene offended, might by you haue bene depriued of that which otherwise they should haue had. The feare of which would haue bene haply one motiue to moue them all, to haue bene content. But seeing it is otherwise, I will aduise you what is best yet to do in this case: first, you shall do well to call all your children together, and such else of your friends as you would haue present.

Christ. *Should all my children be present at my last Will or testamẽt making?*

Min. Yea surely for these causes principally,

cipally, first, that all of thē might haue your blessing with incouragement in all good and Christian duties, wherin they haue walked; and reprehension with admonition, for their euils. Secondly, for the auoiding of strife, and the establishing of peace and loue amongst them; which is a thing much to be respected amongst all, much more of a father amongst his childrē. Thirdly, all that a father shall say at that time to his childrē in reproouing and rebuking of sin, & allowing and commending of vertue, shall be the more deeply imprinted in the hearts of his childrē, being so solēnly done, and the last words, as it were, of their father, vpon his death-bed: yea we see often that they which are farre from being godly disposed, do by the light of nature, much respect the things giuen them in charge by their father vpon his death-bed. Therefore it is meete that all your children

ſhould be preſent, and all this muſt be performed, by you with fatherly wiſedome and iudgement without partiality: not puniſhing a ſmall fault, with a great puniſhment, nor a great fault with a ſmall puniſhment, but proportionable to the offence muſt the puniſhment be; for ſo doth God alwaies deale with his children, and ſo muſt earthly fathers with their children. A notable preſident of all this we haue, in that holy Patriarch Iacob and his ſonnes, wherewith I know you are well acquainted. Gen. 49.

Chriſtian.

But what if ſome children be ſo euill diſpoſed, that for that cauſe they ſhould be thought not fit to be preſent at their fathers Will?

Miniſter.

That any be ſo, is one principall reaſon that they ſhould rather be there, than the other better diſpoſed:

for that, as before is said, they should be bettered; by their fathers last sharp reprehension, if any thing will preuaile with them. And this doth that former instãce of Iacobs sonnes, plainely set forth; for Ruben was present, though he had a curse, for lying with his fathers concubine; Symeon and Leui, though the like for their cruell murthering the Sichemites; all the ten sonnes of Iacob, beside Ioseph and Beniamin: though treacherously they had dealt concerning Ioseph, and sold him. Therefore they must be there the rather.

Christian.

But what if distance of place do let that some cannot be present?

Minister.

Such necessity then must be considered, and those absent the more carefully, not the lesse respected.

Christian.

Hauing but one ſmall poſſeſſion of land, and that in my power to giue to whom I will, who ſhould by Gods ordinance be mine heire?

Miniſter.

Your eldeſt ſonne, for he is the beginning of your ſtrength, and your firſt borne. Deut. 21. 15. 16. 17.

Chriſtian.

What if he be an euill and diſobedient child, and likely to ſell it?

Miniſter.

You may tye him in ſome couenants beſt to preuent that. But if he be ſo diſſolute, you may quite depriue him.

Chriſtian.

Is there any warrant of that in Gods word?

Miniſter.

Yea plaine: Ruben before mentioned, and Adoniah, whom Dauid his

his father did disinherite, and made godly Salomon his heire; whose words to Adoniah his elder brother, are words to be written with the pen of a Diamond in the heart of euery father, that he may so giue warning to his children: If thou wilt shew thy selfe a worthy man, there shall not a haire fall from thy head, but if wickednesse be found in thee, thou shalt surely die. But this must be carefully looked vnto, that so great a punishment, as the depriuation of an inheritance, be not inflicted for too small offences, especially if the party offending be one that truly and vprightly feareth God, and those offences haue bene but slips of infirmitie. He that for a small fault in this kind will disinherit his heire, may looke himselfe to be by his heauenly Father disinherited of the kingdome of heauen. And this is most fearefull against those fathers, which do least esteeme,

Mat. 6. 15. & Chap. 18. 35.

or rather hate any child that shall incline himselfe truly to feare the Lord; and euery slip or small fault of theirs shall be esteemed great, and great offences indeede in others shall be counted nothing: yea those that are best disposed, many times haue that which is due to them, giuen to those that are meerely carnall.

Christian.

What is to be done with the rest, besides the heire?

Minister.

All being alike godly and dutifull euery way, and of like estate in wealth or want, to haue like portions giuen them.

Christian.

What if some be in good estate to liue already, & others poore, yet not through any default of theirs?

Minister.

The poorest must accordingly be holpen, and the richer must haue the lesse,

leſſe; for God commandeth all to pittie and relieue the poore, and there ſhall be iudgement mercileſſe to him that is not mercifull: to thoſe that are diſtreſſed any manner of way, eſpecially mercy and charity muſt be extended, to thoſe that are neare of kin. And fearefull is it for any child to couet that, which belongeth to another; for Gods curſe, not his bleſſing ſhall be ſure to go with that. And moſt vnnaturall were that father that would procure a curſe vpon his child with his gift of ſome worldly thing, which by right according to Gods word and will, belongeth to ſome other: yet is it too cõmon, that many children care not, ſo they may haue all, or the moſt part, though ſome other farre better & godlier then they do want, and are ready to beg with pouertie: and they therewith get the fearefull curſe of God vpon themſelues, and all that they haue, yea,

Iam. 2. 13.

1 Tim. 5. 4. 16.

and

and their posterity also.

Christian.

This were very fearefull, for any fathers, or children indeede. But now for children that haue had stockes already, as daughters to their mariage, or sonnes for lawfull and honest vses in their trades, or the like, they hauing had portions already are to rest satisfied.

Minister.

All this is rightly to be considered and they all in some proportionable measure to be equalled at the last, as their estate with the other circumstances, as is before mentioned, do require. But for daughters if any part remaine vnpaid of that portion promised to their mariage, it must be satisfied. For in that, aswell as in all other things, no wrong must be done, nor any, neither neere nor farre off, defrauded; for the Lord is an auenger of all such things. And they that regard not to deale vprightly with all,

1 Thess. 4. 6.

much

much more with thoſe neere vnto them, do come within the compaſſe of thoſe wrong doers, and promiſe breakers, that ſhall not inherite the kingdome of heauen. Pſalm. 15.

Chriſtian.

May one ſinne then, in diſpoſing of his owne lands or goods, ſo haynouſly that he may by God in his iuſtice, be therefore depriued of heauen, and conſequently be caſt downe to hell to be tormẽted euermore? Me thinks that ſeemeth very harſh.

Miniſter.

Yet ſo it is moſt certainly; for firſt we know, that euery ſinne deſerueth the ſame in it ſelfe, as ſaith the Apoſtle, the wages of ſinne is death. But Rom. 6. 23.
in this, one may ſin moſt haynouſly, as many do in giuing their goods, lands, or monie, to their lewde harlots, or baſtard children; hauing liued moſt damnably in their former life, and leauing their owne lawfull

wife

wife and children vtterly destitute. Also those that make foolish and ridiculous Willes, disposing some to this prophane vse, and some to that; all being wanted by some neere vnto
1 Tim. 5. 4. them, to whom of right it doth belong. Also all those that do in disposing of it deale partially, without such iudgement as God requireth therein, so that those which are best loued of God, shall be sure to haue least, and such as are not religious, but meere carnall, or else open prophane, to haue most: or depriuing the heire of his inheritance, because he is more godly then he would haue him; or for some small fault, and passing ouer grosse offences in others. Finally he that loueth not as God loueth, and hateth not as God hateth, being mercifull to the poorest, louing to the godliest, sharpe to the wickedst, and comfortable to the distressedst, iust & vpright to all without carnall respects

or

or partialitie, is culpable in this kind, and liable to the wrath and condemnation of the Almighty, euen for this last sinne.

Christian.

If this matter be of so great weight and moment, then me thinkes it is not to be taken in hand rashly, without the advice, and assistance of some who are able to counsell in all things, according to Gods word, and to iudge thereby aright of euery offence committed, with the circumstances, increasing or lessening the fault: also the punishment, by Gods word proportionable to the offence, as before you haue declared: but this rule is little regarded. Nay my selfe, though (I thanke God for his mercy) I haue learned something out of Gods word in all my dayes, little considered the weight of this poynt, as now I do see plainely by your godly instructions. And well I perceiue, that they which headily further their friends in making their Willes, without such as

can

can thus instruct them, do most dangerously further them in the way to hell, as much as in them lyeth. I would not for a thousand poundes but haue had this your happie and blessed counsell and instruction in this my last action, as it were, or will making: for litle thought I of taking such rules or warrants in euery thing from Gods word about thus.

Minister.

It is indeede too much neglected, neither do any almost teach it, or write it effectually, that so it might be learned by all as it ought. But one thing is yet behinde, whereof I haue not yet aduised you from the Lord, and that is this, namely your remembring the poore members of Iesus Christ (your poore neighbours:) for all that you shall do vnto such, our Lord Iesus Christ doth esteeme it, as done vnto himselfe, yea if one be able to giue but a cup of cold water, and hauing bene charitable, as euery true

Mat. 25.

member

member of Christ is, and must be, in your life; you shall do well to testifie at the end, when you are going to giue vp your account to God, that you are not lesse louing, and pittifull to the poore, than you haue bene before. For they that haue not, for the loue of Christ onely, done any such good to his poore members, to them that cannot be said in the last and euerlasting blessing: When I was hungry ye fed me, when I was thirsty, ye gaue me drinke, I was a stranger and ye lodged me, naked, and ye clothed me, &c. But that shall be said to all, that go into life eternall: Therefore they that haue done no such good to the poore, shall neuer enter into life eternall. Mat. 25.

Christian.

This poynt also I neuer was so effectually taught in before, as now you haue shewed it: and well I perceiue that they which regard not with pittie and com-

paſsion, to giue to Chriſt in his poore members, can iuſtly looke for no part of that bleſsing of Chriſt which you mentioned before. And moſt wofull is this, me thinkes, againſt all thoſe, who haue little or no feeling of their poore diſtreſſed brethren. And alas, this is the moſt common charity now a daies, euen that which Saint Iames reprouetb ſo ſharpely: Iam. 2. 15. 16. *Go warme your ſelues, and fill your bellies, but they giue them neither of that they want: ſo we vſe to ſay in theſe daies, Alas poore wretches, God helpe you, and comfort you; and this is all. But here is one thing doubtfull, ſome are very wicked, and vngodly of the poore, and ſhould they be pitied, as the godly and Chriſtian ſhould?*

Miniſter.

We muſt do good vnto all, but eſpecially to them that are of the houſhold of faith: but thoſe that are not yet called we muſt loue, as our ſelues, for they are our neighbours,

euen

euen all men and women: as the example of the Samaritan doth notably set forth; and therfore in distresse ought to be relieued. And who knoweth whether our kindnesse, and good example, as also Christian admonition, may not be an occasion to win them to Christ? Therefore what you will giue that way, commit the distribution thereof to some Christian neighbour, with generall direction from you, and in particular, if you know any poore Christians that haue more neede then other; or to whom by any speciall band, you are more neere then to other, them in particular you may nominate your selfe: and you may also referre the like disposing of some, to your Christian friends or ouerseeers, vnto such particular distressed Christians as they know stand in neede, besides the generall.

Christian.

I do most heartily thanke you, and God for you; and now I will craue your fauour and further assistance, to do all this that you haue shewed me: and I pray you, if I do faile in any thing, helpe me and assist me; for through my paine, or weakenesse of memory, or distraction other waies, I may, and shall surely do amisse.

Minister.

I will be your assistant in what I can, as God by his grace shall enable me.

All that before said being finished and fully accomplished, here followeth a prayer, containing the summe of all, very profitable for one in that case to contemplate of.

O Lord my God, I am now ready, when it pleaseth thee, to appeare before thy iudgement seate, to
Luke 16.2. giue vp an account of my stewardship,

ſhip as all men muſt do, when thou ſhalt call them. Of thy bounty ô mercifull Father, I receiued and haue enioyed all theſe worldly things, for my better and more chearefull ſeruing of thee, in my Iourney towards heauen: and not mine, but thine they be ô Lord: and therefore now I leaue them to thoſe whō thou in thy word haſt commanded me to diſpoſe them vnto. I know deare Father that the ſame which thy word ſaith, the ſame wilt thou thy ſelfe ſay, and nothing elſe, when my ſoule ſhal appeare before thy tribunall: whatſoeuer thy word iuſtifieth, that wilt thou iuſtifie; whatſoeuer thy word condemneth, that wilt thou condemne. Knowing therefore the terrour of thy wrath againſt all ſinne, I haue endeuored to the vttermoſt, according to thy grace giuen me, (for of my ſelfe I can do nothing that is good) to finiſh and cloſe vp this my

mortall life, by the sacred line and rule of thy holy word in euery thing. As therefore, heauenly Father, thou hast ordained it a rule in nature, that
2 Cor. 12. 14. fathers should lay vp for their children, and giue them their portions to their abilities; so haue I endeuoured to do. As thou hast dealt with thy Churches and children, so haue I thy vnworthy seruant endeuored to fol-
Reuel. 2. 3. Chap. low thy example in reprouing vice, in commending vertue, in encouraging in goodnesse, and discouraging and condemning all euill: in blessing where thou dost blesse, and cursing where thou dost curse; in louing most those that loue thee most, and least those that shew least loue to thee. I haue giuen most to those who thou in thy word commandest me to giue most vnto, and least to those to whom thou in thy word appoyntest least vnto. For I know ô Lord, that as thou didst appoint out the lots

lots and seuerall portions of thy peoples inheritãces in the land of Canaã, namely of Iacobs twelue sonnes: and Ioshua whom thou appointedst to deuide it vnto thine, might not distribute any otherwise then thou didst appoint him, more, or lesse: so should I and all thy seruants, as neere as possible we can, follow thy direction therein. And if I haue not so done to the vttermost of my power, but dealt partially through carnall affection: if I haue looked least to thy glory, and most to worldly respects, then wo be vnto me, now I am approaching before thee, to giue vp mine accounts. But thou ô Lord seest the vprightnes of my heart, that I desire to do in all things as thou commandest: be mercifull vnto me deere Father in Christ thy sonne, according to the vprightnesse of my heart, and passe by all my infirmities. I know ô heauenly Father that there shall be iudgement merci- Iosh. 14. 1. 2.

Iam.2.13. mercileſſe, to him that ſheweth not
mercie. That he muſt be pitifull and
Mat.18.33. compaſſionate, that would haue thee
pitifull to him. That he which will
Mat.6.15. not forgiue, ſhall neuer be forgiuen
of thee. O Lord, I freely from my
heart forgiue al that euer haue wron-
ged me, and am therein comforted
that thou alſo haſt freely forgiuen me
for Chriſts ſake: and I beſeech thee ô
Lord to forgiue all thoſe, that haue
done me wrong, and pardon all their
ſinnes, if it be thy bleſſed will. And
Lord in mercie behold all thy peo-
ple; thoſe that feare thy name in truth
eſtabliſh them to the end therein:
thoſe that are yet in blindneſſe, open
their eies to ſee the things pertaining
to their ſaluation. And let the light
of thy Goſpell ſhine more and more
brightly to the baniſhing of all errour
& ignorance throughout the whole
world, if it be thy bleſſed will. Parti-
cularly for my children & poſteritie,

(members

(members of thy Church,) Lord
bleſſe them and their ſeede to the
end of the world; and let thy bleſ-
ſings both ſpirituall and temporall be
powred plentifully vpon them: eſta-
bliſh thoſe of them, that are already
effectually called to thy feare, and
ſtrengthen them euery way to the
end therein. Conuert thoſe of them
that are not yet ſo effectually called,
and make them all zealous in thy
waies, to their euerlaſting ſaluation
through Ieſus Chriſt. Thou gaueſt
them me O Lord, the greateſt bleſ-
ſing of all worldly bleſſings: and
now I reſigne them vp to thee againe,
beſeeching thee to be a Father vnto
them as thou haſt bene to me, and
them too, euer ſince we had a being.
O teach them to bring vp their chil-
dren in thy feare, and to eſteeme that
aboue all worldly things whatſoeuer.
And thus Lord I commend my ſelfe,
ſoule, body, and all that I haue, into

thy hands, beseeching thee to qualifie my paines, and giue me strength and patience to the end to beare the extremitie thereof. And hasten sweete Sauiour to deliuer me out of miserie, and wipe away all teares frō mine eyes; euen so, come Lord Iesus, come quickly, Amen, Amen: and let thy whole family in heauen and in earth say, Amen.

Me thinkes I heare this ioyfull sentence sounding in mine eares, Come thou blessed of my Father, inherite the kingdome prepared for thee, from the beginning of the world. Mat. 25. 34.